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ABSTRACT

Issues for policymakers at the national and local authority levels concerning teacher appraisal are discussed, from the perspective of a local educational agency advisor in London, England. Teacher appraisal is one of the ways in which the plurality characterizing the English and Welsh education systems is being replaced by a national system. At the present, there is a trend toward a control model. The question that remains is the extent to which principles behind the curriculum can differ from the teaching profession's own system of improvement. The model chosen for appraisal will shape the training required for the appraiser. The training model chosen must be consistent with the philosophy of the education system overall. Structure and practices of new appraisal programs should be determined locally rather than nationally.
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BRITISH EDUCATION RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
TEACHER APPRAISAL

Section 1.

Issues for Policy Makers at the National and Local Authority levels.

Paper 1.

Issues from the perspective of a L.E.A. Adviser: Del Goddard,
Chief Adviser, Enfield.

1.0 THE PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES

- 1.1 The drafting of this paper and the production of the abstract came before the current round of consultative documents issued by the Secretary of State. The clarity of the messages in the documents significantly changes the context in which this theme must be considered. A consistency of approach based on a model of control now spans curriculum, staff and the organisation of the system. The art of management and the complex relationships of curriculum, teachers, students, society and the rapidly changing structure of the education system has always had to deal with differences of belief. The significant points for this paper is that the plurality that characterised the English/Welsh education system is being rapidly removed by the centralisation and structuring of a national system that is based on a particular set of principles. Appraisal is one of the means by which this is being achieved.

It is not the central improvement aim of appraisal that causes difficulty but the ways in which those aims are turned into reality, for the process is value laden and undertaken both consciously and unconsciously.

The education system embraces/ed plurality though its decentralisation by enabling managers at all levels to modify structures and processes to fit with their management beliefs whilst working towards the agreed broader aims of the school, LEA or wider society.

This principle of management recognises the extent to which decisions should be made in order to enable the other parts of the system to operate effectively (and efficiently).

- 1.2 The main aim of appraisal is the improvement of the quality of teaching and the work of teachers. It must be remembered that the quality of learning for students is not solely affected by the act of teaching in classrooms but the totality of the work of teachers in schools.

From the origin of the debate when appraised for teachers on a systematic basis was launched it was clear that most if not all agreed with the central aim if described in the above terms.

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In the context of teaching quality, the value position of the Government on appraisal was already becoming clear in terms of the management of the teaching force - a mechanism of control. It is necessary to note that at this stage the same underlying principles had not been expressed in curricular or organisational policies thus raising paradoxes both structurally and operationally across the whole service.

- 1.3 The significance and potential impact of appraisal on all the people in the education service (leaving aside the recent proposals) lies in the central difference of belief and practice between those who wish to control and sanction others and those who wish to create the conditions in which people are motivated and empowered to develop their abilities.

This major difference permeates most of education. Whilst I have put it in very simple if not simplistic terms it affects classroom practice and management approaches at every level and probably accounts for much of the dissonance that occurs. Yet rarely is it thoroughly analysed, discussed and consciously developed into criteria for the development of systems.

- 1.4 The first major appraisal issue arises from these differences of belief and the management practices that stem from them.

Notwithstanding the extent of the consciousness of the beliefs of management and the consistency of practice of the LEA and its institutions, the present trend in appraisal schemes towards a control model may well raise considerable difficulties for all managers at every level whether or not they hold similar or different beliefs. It is conceivable that alternate beliefs will or are held and put into practice at different levels of the system. The question it raises is whether this is desirable or undesirable, necessary or irrelevant, needing to remain covert or be made overt or is all of this overridden by the more essential management function to maintain a motivated, committed teacher force at middle levels (LEAs and Head Teachers) which must be enabled to operate within their own beliefs about the management of people.

- 1.5 The desirability of a national scheme with universal structures and processes imposed on an education system that contains a wide spectrum of beliefs is a fundamental question.

This throws into question the value of a pilot scheme if the purpose of it is to arrive at a "perfect scheme" but I will return to this change issue later.

- 1.6 The second major issue has been overtaken by events.

In the earlier stages of this debate there was a major dissonance between the curriculum philosophy represented for example by T.V.E.I., profiling

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and records of achievements which espoused a growth model for pupils and could be starkly contrasted with the control model that many staff appraisal schemes are based on.

However the recent consultative documents and writings on the walls in York Road bring the inconsistencies referred to in the abstract into line!

Nevertheless the question that still exists and will do so whatever legislative curriculum is imposed is the degree to which the principles that inform the curriculum can be different for the teachers. Can a curriculum for pupils that seeks self discipline, and responsibility for ones own learning and development be delivered by a profession that does not have a system of improvement based on the same principles of growth and learning.

2.0 APPRAISAL AND ITS ORGANISATIONAL SETTING

2.1 The second set of issues stem from the organisational setting of an appraisal scheme.

Fundementally, appraisal is concerned with enabling the subject to improve their abilities. The issues raised above impinge at this point over how much manoeuvrability each part of the system requires in order to bring into co-existence their own philosophies with those of the imposed framework. Aside from this the writer has read a number of schemes which espouse a set of aims couched in professional growth terms yet seek to establish controlling practices.

It is evident that major inconsistencies often exist at scheme level. For example the appraisee has reduced or limited power over the system - the process is not a learning model but judgemental, yet the aims espouse professional growth.

2.2 There are a substantial number of questions/criteria that need to be formulated around the operational and structural components of any scheme in relation to the espoused aims of appraisal.

One of the areas of difficulty for LEA's and researchers will be the harmonization of a set of aims that covers the spectrum of control and growth with a related set of practices. Can such a marriage be achieved? and if it can what does the theoretical model look like let alone the practice.

3.0 THE TRAINING ISSUES

3.1 The third set of issues lies beyond the structure in the domain of the appraiser and appraisee's skills and understanding of the process. Whilst there are skills common to whatever system of appraisal is introduced it is my belief that both the emphasis and the set of required skills will differ according to the adopted model.

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- 3.2 A model that gives responsibility to the subject to accumulate the evidence on their practice from a variety of sources requires a set of skills and attitudes as well as an understanding of the purpose of the system that are significantly different from a judgemental model that requires the appraiser to provide information and judgements, even ideas on the means of improvement.

The position of the appraiser and appraisee can be classified in relation to the system and some estimate of their staff development needs made. At present the level of thought given to this aspect is based on the assumption that appraisal systems will require similar training irrespective of its particular characteristics.

Whilst the specific training will draw on known and well developed training resources, practices and trainers. Each programme will need to be designed in relation to its setting especially if the management of appraisal allows for/enables the philosophical variation articulated in the first part of this paper. Thus each LEA will need to carefully construct a programme which suits its approach and has sufficient flexibility to enable the school approaches to be consistently trained for.

Whatever has occurred at the philosophical, structural level it is essential that the training programme is explicit and consistent with the scheme's objectives.

Inconsistency at this point is likely to raise the most operational problems.

- 3.3 Further concerns emerge regarding the scale of training in relation to the objectives.

Assuming a professional growth model that requires action on the part of the subject and skilled appraisers at every level of the system - in other words everyone can be an appraiser and is appraised, then the training implications are that all teachers will require extensive training that makes GCSE look like an afternoon "one off" course.

The major point being that the content of appraisal and the skills and attitudes demanded of all parties, are both professional and personal and are at the centre of professionalism, perceived quality and self image.

Of all the professional duties listed in the new conditions of service none are quite so central to the personal and professional self image of teachers and their relationship with each other than appraisal - whichever model is implemented.

- 3.4 The model of training used to prepare and support teachers will need to be consistent with the philosophy of the scheme (A question as well).

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A cascade model of training based on line management embraces one set of values. How then do you train for a professional growth model when appraisal can be subordinate or peer orientated?

The inset framework and the change process which is the subject of the next set of issues will need to be designed to enable the relevant skills to be acquired, attitudes and philosophies explored and the programme and framework that houses the various "courses" kept in harmony with the scheme's objectives.

4.0 THE CHANGE PROCESS

The fourth set of issues concerns the change process itself.

- 4.1 The central philosophical discussions referred to above occupy stage centre in the model of change. It is not an area of agreed objectives with a well tried repertoire of implementation strategies for LEAs and schools to call upon.

- 4.2 Each successive innovation in education over the last few years has aimed to affect an increasing number of pupils and teachers. At this point in time the education agenda is full of items that affect all pupils and all teachers. Appraisal until August was nearly the front runner to be the first innovation to affect every teacher.

This aspect of change is a paper in itself (and the writer submerged under consultative papers was unable to develop the points in time).

The knowledge base on which the LEA can draw or researchers refer to is substantial enough to deal with the designing of a programme of implementation.

- 4.3 The difficulties lie around the twin problems of handling appraisal as one element of change alongside a multiplicity of initiatives and the capacity and ability of the key personnel in the education system to design and manage the change process as distinct from the training programme.

- 4.4 The successful initiation, implementation, and institutionalisation of appraisal over the next 5 - 7 years requires a substantial level of strategic planning. I believe the beginnings of such management can be found to varying degrees in different LEAs with GRIST, WRNAFE and GCSE.

- 4.5 The substantive change characteristics of appraisal require early identification. I trust the pilot scheme will do this. A "starter for ten" of such points would include:-

- a) The range of decision making processes or implementation discussions depending on the level of imposition of a national scheme.

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- b) The integration of appraisal systems with other review mechanisms at institutional and LEA levels.
- c) The impact on INSET arrangements and other systems directly or indirectly related to appraisal, e.g. promotion.
- d) The training programme itself.

- 4.6 Returning to the purpose of a pilot scheme or set of schemes and the establishment of a national appraisal scheme or framework. The question that needs to be considered is what are the objectives behind the current work. Is it to work out the most effective model in philosophical terms or the problems associated with devising a scheme that espouses growth and control or to examine implementation and training issues.

My wish is that a process is set up similar to the TVEI extension that requires LEAs to establish appraisal schemes consistent with their own approach to the management of the teaching force. Certain nationally agreed aims will need to be set but the structures and practices need to be locally determined. Whilst a number of points in this paper will still apply, a more effective framework for the development of appraisal will have been established.

- 4.7 Much of this may be relatively straight forward until or unless the objective is to align the management styles of the LEA and its institutions within the imposed or agreed philosophical approach.

At this point we have come full circle.

- 4.8 Appraisal cannot (unless totally marginalised) be treated as a bolt on set of practices requiring a short burst of skill training. Whilst the education system has long learnt to deal with changes it doesn't believe in, with strategies to diffuse them, the aim of improving the quality of work in schools remains valid.

The danger is that the working out and implementation of a sound appraisal system that meets the needs of the service and commands the commitment of teachers may not be on the same timescale as politicians would like.

- 4.9 The philosophical differences will be around for many more years but that should not inhibit the examination of them so that the development of a system of appraisal can be properly informed. It is time that debate on the management of the teaching force moved out of the dark ages.

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